



University of Connecticut
School of Law

February 16, 2011

Dear Rep. Urban and Members of the Committee on Children:

As a lawyer, legal educator, expert in animal law and parent, I strongly urge you to support new legislation (HB5530) that would allow students to opt out of classroom animal dissection and be provided with humane alternatives.

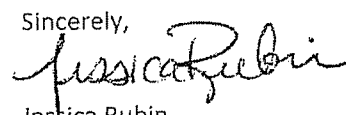
Since 1988, fifteen states have responded to growing student concerns about the ethical treatment of animals and enacted laws and other official policies allowing students with moral, religious and other objections to harming animals to be excused from classroom animal dissection. These states include our closest neighbors in New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Colleges and universities across the country have also adopted policies giving students the choice of completing alternative assignments in place of dissection.

The genesis of these laws and policies was, and continues to be, that students wishing to act consistently with their moral, religious and other beliefs against harming animals, and objecting to classroom exercises that harm animals or dissect animals killed for classroom use, have been subjected to formal and informal punitive action from educators and administrators. All too frequently, students are forced to engage in these activities against their will. In other cases, they are excused begrudgingly and their grade in the course is negatively affected.

It is unnecessary and unfair that students should fear being put in these uncomfortable—and in some cases traumatic—situations, especially when effective alternatives to animal dissection abound. Indeed animal dissection is not required by any state educational standard. Even the most prominent science education professional organizations in the country, the National Science Teachers Association and the National Association of Biology Teachers, agree that students should have the right to opt out of animal dissection.

On a personal level, all of my children will soon be at ages where their science classes may begin to dissect animals. I sincerely hope that they will have the law on their side when they inevitably voice their objections to this practice.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,


Jessica Rubin
Assistant Clinical Professor of Law

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